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SIPDIS

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FOR SA/PAB, SA/PPD (LSCENSNY, SSTRYKER), SA/RA, INR/R/MR,
AND PASS TO USAID FOR ANE/ASIA/SA/B (WJOHNSON)

CINCPAC FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR, J51 (MAJ TURNER), J45
(MAJ NICHOLLS)

USARPAC FOR APOP-IM (MAJ HEDRICK)

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SUBJECT: Media Reaction: Iran; Dhaka

Summary: On the reported U.S. move to deny visa to the Iranian President to attend the U.N. conference, independent "New Age" says that it would create a dangerous precedent.

On the Iranian decision to resume conversion of uranium into nuclear fuel, "Bangladesh Observer" notes that the U.S. still hopes for a diplomatic solution and urges Iran to avoid confrontation.

Iran

"Ahmadinejad and a Visa"
Independent English language newspaper "New Age" editorially comments (8/11):

The Bush administration will be making a terrible mistake if it refuses to grant a visa to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for next month's UN General Assembly session. While it is still a little too early to comment on whether such a dire happening will come to pass, one cannot but be worried at reports that the American authorities are actually in the process of considering the issue.... But if President Bush and his officials now decide, on the basis of their belief that Mr. Ahmadinejad may have been involved in the hostage-taking affair in 1979, that the Iranian leader does not qualify for an American visa, they will not only be breaking with convention but will also be setting a dangerous new precedent. The current administration in Washington has already become known for the arch conservatism it has chosen as its policy plank. It has sent controversial men such as John Bolton to the United Nations despite the fact that his nomination had been stalled in the Senate. But the conservatism which the administration symbolizes may finally reach an incendiary point should President Ahmadinejad be denied a visa. As it is, the strains relating to Iran's nuclear program have done good damage to the prospect of good relations between Tehran and Europe on the one hand and Tehran and Washington on the other. In such circumstances, raising the visa issue can only compound matters.

"Iran's Nuclear ambitions and the U.N."
Independent English language newspaper "Bangladesh Observer" editorially comments (8/11):
In light of Iran's rejection of EU offers of trade incentives in exchange for a suspension of all nuclear work that could be used to build weapons, U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's interest in Azerbaijan can be understood. American over flights of Iranian soil are already reported to be taking place using pilotless drones and other more sophisticated capabilities, thus the battle with Iran appears to have gone way beyond the intelligence gathering phase. And to the north, in neighboring Azerbaijan, the U.S. military is preparing a base of operations for a massive military presence that will foretell a major land based campaign designed to capture Tehran. Iran still insists its nuclear program is for peaceful energy purposes, and says it is keeping its freeze on another, more advanced, process in the program to enrich uranium... the United States maintains -- and European countries have come agree that -- Iran intends to make nuclear weapons. Tied into this is the proliferation challenge that has engulfed the world -- including non-compliance by North Korea and Iran and the revelation of illicit nuclear procurement networks. If Iran could hide its nuclear enrichment program from IAEA for nearly two decades before officially declaring it in 2003, other countries could do that too.... As reported, the U.S. is still pinning its hopes on finding a diplomatic solution rather than engage in

open confrontation, that hope seems to be fading fast as European diplomats now say they would have little choice but to ask for the agency, the international Atomic Energy Agency, to place the issue before the United Nations Security Council for possible political and economic sanctions.

Chammas